

## **Analyzing and Explaining Electoral Preferences Based On Class**

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### **Extended Abstract**

#### **1. Introduction**

The present study deals with analyzing and explaining electoral preferences based on the analysis of occupation classes. To date, electoral preferences in Iran has not been analyzed experimentally. Despite a few studies after the Islamic Revolution on social classes in Iran, these inquiries have been overlooked due to a variety of reasons (Haji Yousefi, Farazi, & Keyvan Ara, 2012). Certain researchers in Iran have challenged the efficiency of class analysis using Skase's (2001) idea that class is no longer a valid descriptive or analytic tool and as class has been deteriorating as a means for analysis, the existential cause behind academic sociology has been declining as well (Ghaderi & Kaveh, 2015)). On the other hand, some have emphasized analysis based on class as they associate Khatami's victory in the Seventh Iranian Presidential election to the middle class (Saei, 2007; Bashiriyeh, 2008; Ghouhani, 2000; Bohrani, 2010; Seifzadeh and Golpayegani, 2009; Zibakalam et al., 2009); It is also believed that Ahmadinezhad's victory has been the result of the middle class's passivity and progress of the underprivileged class (Qasemi Siyani, Ravash, & Mahmoudi Raja, 2016). Examination into the background of the study suggest the higher emphasis placed on the middle class along with the exploration of political behavior in this group. Given such a background, there exists a significant conflict in these studies due to the difference of this class's behavior in the seventh (1997), tenth (2005), and eleventh (2009) presidential elections.

Given the absence of a comprehensive work with respect to the political behavior of classes in Iran and the paradoxical results obtained from examining the political behavior of the middle class, this study seeks to examine the orientation and preferences of classes in presidential elections.

#### **2. Review of Literature and Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework adopted by the present study is based upon the cybernetic stratification theory (Chelbi, 1996). Using Parson's action theory (AGIL) in discussing social roles, Chelbi classifies them horizontally into four

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main parts in relation to four areas; the horizontal separation of roles includes cultural, social, political, economic roles. Moreover, in this theory, roles can be observed according to criteria related to the extent of energy consumption and information in a hierarchical manner, in four categories including strategic, influential, auxiliary, and ordinary roles. In this theory, sixteen types of social stances are introduced in relation to the two distinction types of horizontal and vertical (Chelbi, 1996). The potential elite class can form a structural group. Given the connection between the members due to the relatively low volume of members, relatively high properties, and official and unofficial multifold networks, everyone allows for this class to become a structural one. In fact, the elite class (strategic) often act as a social group in its sociological sense. As Marx posits, the elite class is a class for itself; yet descending from the peak of the stratification pyramid, the constructs of classes and strata gradually become weaker and weaker. This majorly results from three factors: first, the population that occupies each stance increases at lower levels of the pyramid; the second is their lack of resources; and third and most important one is the weak network density between their social relations. Accordingly, one cannot imagine a structural feature for the ordinary and underprivileged group. As a matter of fact, said classes can be considered as logical classes. In other words, these classes are merely a set of individuals with relatively common stances, difficulties and blessings. Consequently, they also have a set of common privileges and benefits (Chelbi, 1996).

When using the above theory, it is necessary to express that the model might be difficult to be applied for analyzing stratification in Iran due to the absence of data. Nevertheless, it has been attempted to offer an exclusive analysis while maintaining the totality of the theory and considering the background of the research as well as the existing 2005 and 2010 consensus.

### **3. Method**

This study was conducted using a sub-national comparative (longitudinal) method. This method deals with comparing social units (in this case, towns) considered by the study. Data were collected using library studies including books, papers, research, theses, etc. The secondary set of data were derived from the information related to the tenth (2009) and eleventh (2013) presidential elections and other document data obtained from related websites. The population of the study included the entire document data from a minimum of 335 towns regarding the tenth and eleventh presidential elections. Unit of analysis involved “year-town” which are socioeconomic units with completely defined geographical limits and characteristics of a social and political presence (i.e., qualified for a political and governance reference). The sample in this study includes the entire towns in Iran at the periods under examination. The electoral preference in this study is limited to the tenth and eleventh presidential elections. Given the interference of ethnic,

cultural and regional orientations, the Islamic Consultative Assembly election could not be examined at this level.

#### **4. Results and Discussion**

The results of the study showed:

The electoral preference of the upper strata that enjoy ownership, authority (organizational and non-organizational), education, and employment at the private sector is reformism and non-principlism.

The electoral preference of the conventional middle class that, to some extent, enjoy ownership, authority (organizational and non-organizational), skills, education, and employment at the private sector is principlism and non-reformism. The new middle class with organizational and non-organizational authority, skills, education, and employment opportunities at the public sector is inclined towards reformism rather than principlism.

The working class employed at the private sector with no ownership and authority (organizational and non-organizational), and lower skills and education are oriented towards reformism. Yet, the electoral preference of the working class in the public sector with no ownership and authority (organizational and non-organizational), and lower skills and education is principlism and non-reformism.

The electoral orientation of the ruling class (upper-echelon political brokers) working in the public sector with both organizational and non-organizational authorities as well as the lower political brokers and militaries are reformism and non-principlism.

#### **5. Conclusion**

The results of the study show that at the level of towns, the electoral preferences of strata in Iran is a witness for the formation of class in the nation. Given their electoral preferences, the upper strata have the capacity to transform into the upper class. This (existence of classes) also holds true for the middle strata (conventional and new). Whether working in the public or private sector, the working strata are unable to transform into a class as they lack specific class preferences that are distinct from other strata. The political and military strata of the society also lack specific class preferences. Descending from the peak of the stratification pyramid, the constructs of classes and strata gradually become weaker and weaker. Hence normally, one cannot imagine a structural characteristic for the working strata.

**Keywords:** Stratum, Occupational Status, Major Occupational Groups, Education Level, Class, Electoral Preference

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